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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2006

In Today's Papers

Turkey Names Retired General as PKK Coordinator
Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak report that Turkey has named retired general Edip Baser as the PKK special coordinator, following the appointment of former NATO Commander General Joseph Ralston by the US Administration for the same job. President Sezer approved the appointment. Papers claim Baser will meet with Ralston during his visit to Turkey on September 13.

Buyukanit Turns Down NATO Call for ISAF Reinforcement in Afghanistan

All papers report General Yasar Buyukanit, the chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) said in response to NATO calls for more troops from member countries that Turkey would send "not a single soldier" to Afghanistan. "We assumed the command of ISAF twice in the past. Our duty in the Kabul regional command is also continuing. In the future, Turkey will continue to contribute to NATO within this framework," Buyukanit said. Turkish papers reported top NATO commander US General James Jones as calling on allied countries to send reinforcements to restive southern Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban. On Turkey's participation in the peacekeeping force in Lebanon, he said Turkish civilian personnel would go to Lebanon to provide humanitarian aid, and that they must be protected. "We are actually going to Lebanon to protect our own nationals, and we will assume no duty other than that," said Buyukanit.

Kamuran Ozbir argues in the nationalist Ortadogu that Turkish participation in UNIFIL inevitably means that Turkey will be drawn into a war: "With the aim of eliminating Hezbollah, Israel, as a proxy for the US, will re-start the war in Lebanon. It is a huge possibility that during this second round, by hitting certain targets, Israel will spread the war to Syria as well. UN Resolution 1701 is worded in favor of the US and Israel. And the UN force to be deployed in Lebanon is going to protect these two countries interests in there. What does this mean? Since Turkey's has decided on participation in the UN force, Turkey, involuntarily, will be participating in the plan the US started in the Middle East

with Iraq operation. When Turkey decided to stay out of the Iraq war by the March 1 [2003] motion, we all thought that it was the right decision. Unfortunately, regardless of the purpose, since Turkey decided to send troops to Lebanon, we will automatically become a part of the war the US is determined to continue. Moreover, with a great possibility, Turkey will be involved in armed clashes."

Babacan Meets Rehn on Europe Tour

All papers: Turkey's chief EU negotiator Ali Babacan met yesterday with EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn and other EU officials in Brussels.

Rehn expressed EU concerns over Article 301 of the penal code [related to freedom of expression], urging Turkey to amend the controversial provision. Babacan and Rehn discussed the shape of Turkey's EU process following the European Parliament Foreign Relations Committee's recent approval of a negative draft report on Turkey's progress. Rehn also reiterated an EU call for Turkey to meet its obligations by expanding customs union agreement in a way to cover EU member Cyprus. Babacan told the press Turkey believed the Cyprus issue should not block EU membership talks with Turkey.

Hoagland Approved as US Ambassador to Yerevan

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak say the Armenian lobby suffered a defeat in the US Congress when a Senate panel backed the appointment of Richard Hoagland as ambassador to Armenia after a heated debate over the withdrawal of the previous envoy John Evans who had sparked controversy with references about the genocide of Armenians at the hand of Ottoman forces during World War I.

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Bush Acknowledges Secret Detention Centers

Hurriyet, Sabah, Yeni Safak report President Bush has acknowledged for the first time the existence of secret CIA detention centers in a speech at the White House on Wednesday. Bush noted that 14 top terror suspects, including the 9/11 mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and lead operative Ramzi Binalshibh, were interrogated in those centers before being transferred to the military prisoner in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He rejected charges that US applied torture during the interrogation of suspects. Sabah reports analysts said the surprise statement by Bush was a tactic aimed to shift attention from Iraq to the global struggle against terrorism before the upcoming US Congressional elections in November.

Ibrahim Karagul urges the Turkish government to go public regarding cooperation with the US over "secret prisons" in the Islamist-opinion maker Yeni Safak: "Secretary Rice was lying to the entire world when she made a statement last year denying the existence of torture planes - even as people were dying in these torture centers. Now President Bush has admitted that there were CIA detention centers, which means the US has finally confessed its responsibility for a crime against humanity. Prior to this confession, the EU report in fact told the whole story behind the CIA torture planes and also named the collaborating countries, including Turkey. On this matter so far we only heard denials from Turkish authorities about actual involvement of the Turkish airports, Istanbul, Incirlik and Diyarbakir, for the detention planes. The Turkish authorities had better be thinking of changing this attitude and becoming transparent on the issue. While they are putting every effort into denying such stories, the US is going to admit it eventually anyway. What happens next, I wonder. Are we going to issue a statement denying what President Bush has admitted? Turkey should act before the US does to make public the details of Turkey's involvement in this particular crime against humanity."

TV Highlights
NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

- On Saturday, a Turkish military team headed by Brigadier-General Tahir Bekiroglu will travel to Lebanon to examine the area where

Turkish peacekeepers will be deployed.

- Financial Times says Turkey's parliament has voted to send troops to join the international force for Lebanon as it seeks to join the EU and to win a seat on the UN Security Council in 2009-2010.

- German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, on a visit to Turkey, promised to work together with Ankara to remove the barriers in front of Turkey's EU membership drive.

International News

- Israel said it lifted the two-month-long air blockade of Lebanon but kept its naval blockade in place until international forces can take over.

- US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Robert Joseph, said the time has come to impose sanctions on Tehran, adding Turkey was expected to comply with the UN Security Council resolutions in this issue.

- Tony Blair has pledged to step down as Prime Minister within 12 months in the face of growing criticism calling for him to quit.

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